

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

all the measures which it undertakes and give it to the members at large, just so soon do we depart from the principle of government which has been laid down after years and years of practice and experience and has been found to be the soundest of all democracies in the world. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would oppose this innovation and the resolution which has been introduced.

Mr. W. C. GOOD (Brant): I have tried to approach this question with an open mind, and I must confess that the speeches of the last two hon. members seemed to me to be very far from convincing. May I present the situation as I see it in a very homely illustration? A good many hon. members here will have had the experience in times past of hiring men to do certain work, and they will have gone to those men at times and asked them to do certain jobs in a certain way. Now, possibly on such an occasion, the hired man will throw up his hands and say, "Well, if my way doesn't suit you, get somebody else." I do not think that attitude is a creditable attitude. It is an attitude that any man might take, that some men, a good many men possibly, do take; but it reflects no credit, as I see it, upon any man who engages to do a job, to resent criticism. He has a right to ask his employer at such a time "Does this criticism mean that you wish me to quit?—I want to know"; and he has a right to an answer. But he has no right as I see it, if he is an honourable right-thinking man, to quit because there is a little criticism, or even more than a little criticism.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that little illustration suggests to me the question of the relationship which exists between the electorate, this House of representatives, and the Cabinet. Theoretically, I know, the Cabinet is chosen by the Prime Minister, by the leader of a so-called majority, section or party, at the request of the King's representative. Theoretically the Cabinet is responsible to the King, or the King's representative; but I think we shall all agree that at the present time, such is largely, if not wholly, a fiction, and that parliament, representing the people, is in the position of master and not servant of the Cabinet. I take it that the Cabinet is asked to look after our executive business, our administration, the business affairs of this country, by and under this parliament; that this parliament is for the time being judge and master; and that going back another step, the people are the judges whether or not this parliament holds the Cabinet properly responsible for the discharge of its duties.

[Mr. Ladner.]

The right hon. gentleman who leads the government (Mr. Mackenzie King) spoke about this being a time when we should be very careful as to innovations. That is—what shall I say?—a time-honoured plea, yet not, I think, honoured by time; but a plea often advanced at such a time as this on behalf of the status quo. In the city of Winnipeg a few years ago we saw something happen which, as I see it, was a very admirable example of the foolishness of that policy. If there is a time when innovation, carefully considered, is desirable, it is at a time of unrest. Any other policy leads only to social explosions and not to social progress. The rigidity of our institutions is always a source of danger, and in my opinion one of the features of the British constitution which is of tremendous importance is its flexibility, its adaptability to changing conditions. Surely, the world moves! In fact, I heard it said once, and, I think, said with a great deal of propriety—"there is nothing changeless in the world but change." If conditions are constantly changing, then we must adapt ourselves to those changing conditions.

As I understand the resolution before the House, it is but an expression of the best practice under conditions as they exist at the present time. Even in Great Britain, as was shown by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Shaw), for many years it has been a very common practice for governments not to take any particular judgment of the House on a specific issue as a vote of no confidence, and it seems to me that, looking at the matter from a commonsense standpoint, the British practice is right. It is particularly necessary at the present time to take cognizance of conditions prevailing. We have now a situation which is very different from what it was a few years ago. We have three very considerable groups in this House, and we have not yet evolved a system of representation in the Cabinet from more than one group. We have no coalition government here, nor have we yet developed a system or method of selecting cabinet ministers out of different groups. If the proportion was somewhat different from what it is at the present time, we would have a minority government. Let us suppose for example, that the government is represented by about one-third of the members of this House, and also that the two other groups constitute one-third each of the membership. How is this policy of cabinet responsibility going to work out under such conditions? We are face to face with a condition, not a theory, and I maintain that the passing of this resolution, the acceptance of it as a general principle, while it could